United Nations A/56/PV.94

General Assembly

Fifty-sixth session

Official Records

94th plenary meeting
Friday, 15 February 2002, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Han Seung-soo ..... (Republic of Korea)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Balzan (Malta), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 125 (*continued*)

Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations

Letter from the Secretary-General (A/56/780/Add.2)

The Acting President: In the letter contained in document A/56/780/Add.2, the Secretary-General informs the President of the General Assembly that since the issuance of his communications contained in documents A/56/780 and Add.1, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya has made the necessary payment to reduce its arrears below the amount specified in Article 19 of the Charter.

May I take it that the General Assembly duly takes note of the information contained in this document?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 32 (*continued*)

Multilingualism

Draft resolution (A/56/L.44/Rev.2)

The Acting President: I give the floor to the representative of France to introduce draft resolution A/56/L.44/Rev.2.

Mr. Levitte (France) (*spoke in French*): First, a technical point. In operative paragraph 9 of the French version of the text of the draft resolution, the words "Dag Hammarskjöld" must be deleted, so that the texts are exactly the same in all the official languages.

I believe that today is an important and happy day for the Assembly. We are all here together in this Hall, representing all the peoples of the world in their cultural, political, religious and economic diversity. This diversity is a fundamental wealth of our humanity. When one says "diversity" in this building, one naturally says "dialogue" — economic dialogue, political dialogue, but also cultural dialogue and, this year in particular, a dialogue of civilizations.

In order to have this dialogue, we must understand one another, and for that purpose we must agree on the question of languages. I think we have

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

02-25456 (E)

succeeded in understanding one another, and I am very much pleased to say so. Understanding means, first of all, respect for the other and hearing the other. It is in this spirit that France, along with all the other sponsors of the text before the Assembly, decided twice, on 11 December and 21 December, to delay voting on the draft resolution because we had the feeling that we had not yet arrived at a perfect understanding through this necessary dialogue.

Today — unlike in 1995, when we last voted on a substantial text on the issue of languages and were divided in that vote — I hope that we shall adopt this text by consensus. I say this with deep satisfaction and express the gratitude of France and all the other sponsors to all those who participated in the many informal meetings that gradually led to an agreement.

My gratitude is addressed first to the sponsors themselves, who agreed not to have a vote and to be flexible in the negotiations. They also agreed that the text now before the Assembly should be a bit less exacting on the question of languages. However, this lesser requirement allows us to have the force of consensus. I say to all the sponsors that it seems to me that a less exacting text, adopted by consensus, has greater political force.

The gratitude of France and all the sponsors also goes to all the States that do not have the good fortune or privilege of being represented in the Assembly through an official language. I am addressing myself particularly to Ambassador Yukio Satoh, but also to the representatives of great countries — such as Korea and countries in South-East Asia, countries in Europe and in Latin America — that are not represented in this Hall through an official language and nevertheless agreed to participate with us in these long and good negotiations, which have enabled us to come together today. I feel that we have been able to take their concerns into account in this text.

In addition, the gratitude of France and the other sponsors goes to the English-speaking countries. Though they are represented by an official language, we needed their understanding. We have listened to the arguments of the countries — including India, Nigeria, South Africa and others — for which English is the second, third or fourth language, used for communication, and thus for which the requirement of learning a second official language is a handicap and a heavy burden, since in universities in the developing countries students must concentrate mainly on studies other than languages.

I think I can say that we have also been able to take into account the arguments of this important group of English-speaking countries — in particular developing English-speaking countries of the South — to help us reach a consensus. We have asked them to listen to the arguments of the developing countries fortunate enough to be represented in this Hall by means of an official language — be it Spanish, French, Russian, Chinese or Arabic — for which that official language is also not their first language, but often the second or third language after their mother tongue, their local or regional tongue and is used for communication, as is the case with English in India or Nigeria. We have asked that their problem also be taken into account.

I think that I am in a position to say that that is the case today. It seems to me, therefore, that the text the Assembly now has before it is the product of a genuine consensus.

In conclusion, let me say that this text represents success for each and every delegation. It is a high-quality text that unites us around a common goal: to promote multilingualism as well as the six official languages of our United Nations, with determination and ambition, but also with realism and pragmatism. This message of unity is addressed especially to the Secretariat, which will have to implement this text day by day.

One last word. This text contains two parts, because, apart from the question of the six official languages, we have also heard from those who, like the Ambassador of Papua New Guinea, want attention to be paid also to those languages spoken by ethnic minorities in their own countries. To that end, we have, with everyone's agreement, asked the Secretary-General to report to us on that issue.

This is what France wanted to say to the Assembly. From the bottom of our hearts, we extend our gratitude to all on behalf of all of the sponsors.

The Acting President: We shall now proceed to consider draft resolution A/56/L.44/Rev.2.

I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Perfiliev (Director, General Assembly and Economic and Social Council Affairs Division): I should like to inform members that, should the General Assembly adopt draft resolution A/56/L.44/Rev.2 on the implementation of the conclusions and recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General (A/56/656), which would be endorsed by operative paragraph 1 of draft resolution A/56/L.44/Rev.2, this would imply a review of those conclusions and recommendations by the relevant intergovernmental organs, including the Committee on Information. Should those intergovernmental organs make recommendations in the context of the review which could lead to additional requirements under the regular budget, a statement of programme budget implications would be submitted to those organs, in accordance with established procedures, as appropriate.

On that understanding, draft resolution A/56/L.44/Rev.2 would have no programme budget implications for the biennium 2002-2003 at this stage.

The Acting President: I shall now give the floor to those representatives who wish to speak before action is taken on the draft resolution. May I remind representatives that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Satoh (Japan): It is indeed a great pleasure for me to speak following the excellent and thoughtful introduction of this draft resolution on multilingualism by Ambassador Jean-David Levitte of France. That text before us represents a consensus reached after two months of negotiations.

I should like to express my heartfelt appreciation to all of my colleagues for their efforts to reach this consensus. Of course, my special thanks go to Ambassador Levitte for his excellent coordinating efforts.

The text of this draft resolution is indeed a great improvement over the previous draft, especially insofar as it contains no language that could be disadvantageous, in terms of employment, to nationals whose mother tongue is not one of the official languages of the United Nations, or to nationals of developing countries where only one of the official languages of the United Nations is taught at school.

In addition, by referring to Article 101 of the Charter and to the relevant General Assembly resolutions, particularly resolution 55/258, this text gives due regard to the principle of equitable geographical distribution, to be observed by the Secretariat in human-resource management.

As recognized in the preambular part of the draft resolution, multilingualism is to be pursued as a means of promoting, protecting and preserving diversity of languages and cultures globally. Obviously, the spirit of cooperation that has characterized our discussion is essential to ensure that such pursuit is productive, and I am therefore very much encouraged by what we have attained together.

Having said this, I should like to conclude my statement by assuring you, Mr. President, that the Japanese Government will continue to work to promote multilingualism in its true sense.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in explanation of position.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/56/L.44/Rev.2.

Before proceeding to take action on the draft resolution, I should like to announce that the Bahamas is not a sponsor of draft resolution A/56/L.44/Rev.2; Djibouti and Somalia are sponsors of the draft; and Nicaragua has become a sponsor of the draft.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/56/L.44/Rev.2?

Draft resolution A/56/L.44/Rev.2 was adopted (resolution 56/262).

The Acting President: I shall now give the floor to those representatives wishing to speak in explanation of position on the resolution just adopted. May I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Mubarez (Yemen) (*spoke in Arabic*): I wish to thank you, Mr. President, for giving me the opportunity, on behalf of the Arab Group, to make a few brief comments on the resolution adopted by the Assembly with regard to multilingualism.

This item has been very important to the Arab Group since the fifty-fifth session. On behalf of the Group, I should like to note that the Arab States all supported the draft resolution contained in A/56/L.44/Rev.1, even before the amendment thereto,

contained in document A/56/L.44/Rev.2, and that many Arab delegations participated in the presentation of the draft resolution by France. However, the amended resolution does not take into account the views presented by the Arab Group.

The Arab Group would have preferred to see an enhanced approach to expanding work in the six official languages. It would have liked the draft resolution to emphasize the need for United Nations staff to know, as a condition of appointment, an official language other than the two working languages. We believe that it would also have been important for the draft resolution to send a message to the Secretariat that interpretation must be available to all meetings, including regional meetings, and that documents must be provided in all six official languages, in accordance with the relevant General Assembly resolutions. Unfortunately, that is often neglected. The Arab Group wishes also to reiterate its view that it is important for the General Assembly to implement all relevant resolutions, without engaging in selectivity.

The Arab Group considers that part II of the resolution does not set out all the objectives to be pursued under this agenda item. But the Arab Group reaffirms its willingness to cooperate with all other delegations when the Assembly takes up this item at its fifty-eighth session.

The Acting President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 32?

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 3.35 p.m.

United Nations A/56/PV.95

General Assembly

Official Records

Fifty-sixth session

95th plenary meeting
Monday, 11 March 2002, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Han Seung-soo ..... (Republic of Korea)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Botnaru (Republic of Moldova), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 4.15 p.m.

Agenda item 125 (*continued*)

Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations (A/56/780/Add.3)

The Acting President: In the letter contained in document A/56/780/Add.3, which has just been distributed in the General Assembly Hall, the Secretary-General informs the President of the General Assembly that, since the issuance of his communications contained in documents A/56/780 and addenda 1 and 2, Haiti has made the necessary payment to reduce its arrears below the amount specified in Article 19 of the Charter.

May I take it that the General Assembly duly takes note of the information contained in this document?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

Adoption of the agenda, allocation of items and organization of work

The Acting President: Members will recall that at its 3rd plenary meeting, on 19 September 2001, the General Assembly decided to allocate agenda item 107 to the Second Committee.

In order for the General Assembly to proceed expeditiously on the item, may I take it that the General Assembly wishes to consider agenda item 107 directly in plenary meeting?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: May I further take it that the Assembly agrees to proceed immediately to the consideration of agenda item 107?

If there is no objection, we shall now proceed accordingly.

Agenda item 107 (*continued*)

High-level intergovernmental consideration of financing for development

Draft decision (A/56/L.74)

The Acting President: I call on the representative of Venezuela.

Mr. Alcalay (Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like to thank the General Assembly secretariat, and in particular the Office of Legal Affairs, for having organized and planned this meeting, which is of great significance given the fact that we are now on the eve of a conference of vital importance in Monterrey — a conference that will enable us to move ahead in the process of financing for development.

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

02-27942 (E)

For decades now, the United Nations has been seeking to define a new international financial architecture, and, thanks to the contributions of the 189 Members — and of Switzerland, which will soon be joining the ranks of the United Nations as an active Member — we have succeeded in producing a consensus-based document that will enable us to achieve a successful outcome in Monterrey, thus fulfilling an important element of the agenda for 2002.

In this context, the delegation of Venezuela submitted, in a proper and timely manner, a draft decision requesting its inclusion — in its capacity as Chairman of the Group of 77 — in the format of the International Conference on Financing for Development. Given the receptivity of the co-Chairman of the Conference and of representatives from both the North and the South, and in view of the planning that has been done for this historic event, Venezuela now wishes to withdraw draft decision A/56/L.74, so that we can — on the basis of the gentlemen's agreement arrived at over the course of this afternoon and previous days — reach a consensus arrangement on our participation.

Following opening statements, we hope to be in a position that will ensure that — in accordance with previous practice — before lots are drawn, my country, Venezuela, which has the honour of chairing the Group of 77, and Spain, which holds the chairmanship of the European Union, will be able to speak during the debate in Monterrey, and that subsequently — if there is agreement in the plenary — other countries will be able to speak on the basis of the drawing of lots that is to take place.

Clearly, this solution is prompted by an international reality shaped by a presidential diplomacy that has ensured that, during this year alone, there will be plenary participation in six events. There is no doubt that the Millennium Declaration has given rise to a new reality in the context of the Organization.

It is clear that today's decision does not set any kind of a precedent as concerns future events. In this respect, we have agreed with delegations at today's meeting that this decision sets no precedent, but that, in the case of this Monterrey consensus, it will allow us to serve as spokesmen for this North-South dialogue, represented by the Group of 77 and the European Union and by the holding of an event that will allow us — in Mexico, in Latin America and in this hemisphere — to lay the groundwork for an agreement on financing for development.

I should like to reaffirm Venezuela's wish to withdraw this draft decision on behalf of the Group of 77. I wish also to thank each and every delegation for its support and understanding, and to assure them that we will be witnessing a momentous event in the early months of 2002.

The Acting President: I give the floor to the representative of Spain.

Mr. Fernandez Trigo (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like to associate myself with the sentiments expressed by the Ambassador of Venezuela and to thank first of all of those who have made it possible for us to find a solution to address a minor problem, a small obstacle that has arisen in the course of our discussions. I think that, in any case, we have all shown flexibility despite our interest in maintaining our own respective positions.

Therefore, I should like to mention especially the Group of 77 and JUSCANZ — Japan, the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand — which have done important work to help us arrive at the compromise just explained by the delegation of Venezuela. It will allow us to go to Monterrey without the bad aftertaste of a vote in which wishes might have been forced for the sake of the majority. This is a much better and much more positive solution for everybody, and we think it is a good basis to resolve this situation. It is a good outcome with respect to the statements at the Monterrey Conference. Moreover, we believe it respects previous solutions reached in similar cases.

We should like to thank everyone — the President of the Assembly, the Co-Chairmen, the Secretariat and all the delegations — for their cooperation. We welcome the fact that the solution reached will allow Venezuela, on behalf of the Group of 77, and Spain, on behalf of the European Union, to speak in first and second place, respectively, before the statements proceed in their turn on the basis of lots.

Mr. Stuart (Australia): I am speaking on behalf of the delegations of Australia, Canada and New Zealand. We regard this agreement on the list of speakers as a pragmatic step taken for the sake of ensuring the smooth running of the important conference at Monterrey, Mexico, next week. Financing for development is a topic of critical

importance to all our delegations, especially those from countries in the process of development.

Our delegations do have some reservations about the decision. We stress that we have agreed to this compromise in the spirit of reaching the necessary consensus on these organizational issues. Our understanding is that this is an arrangement reached for this conference and does not represent a precedent for other United Nations meetings.

Mr. Hirata (Japan): My delegation believes that the order of the list of speakers is a very important procedural issue that should be guided by the basic principles of the Charter of the United Nations, including the principle of sovereign equality.

However, to avoid further delay in the drawing of lots, we have taken the painful decision not to block the gentlemen's agreement that has been reached. This gentlemen's agreement, however, must apply only to the list of speakers for this conference.

Mr. Isakov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The Russian delegation will not object to the proposed plan. At the same time, we feel that such an informal agreement should not create a precedent and serve as a basis to confirm this kind of practice. We cannot allow any action, including those of a procedural nature, to be interpreted as casting doubt on the basic principle of the sovereign equality of Member States of the United Nations.

Mr. Shin Boo-nam (Republic of Korea): The Republic of Korea would like to join the consensus on the arrangement with regard to the list of speakers for the International Conference on Financing for Development, in which the Chairman of the Group of 77 and China, and the European Union will be able to make statements at the first plenary meeting of the summit segment of the Conference.

However, my delegation would like to point out that the arrangement at issue may be inconsistent with the general principle of international conferences, with the defined nature of the Monterrey Conference as an intergovernmental event and with the already agreed modality for the designation of speakers for this Conference, stipulated in the development resolutions and decisions of the United Nations General Assembly. In this regard, we believe that this new arrangement should not constitute a precedent for any organizational work of future intergovernmental conferences or of the United Nations.

The Acting President: I should like to inform members that immediately following the adjournment of this meeting, the drawing of lots will take place in this Hall.

The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 107.

The meeting rose at 4.30 p.m.